

- (vii) Allowing village communities to share in the usufruct of degraded forest lands that they agree to protect and develop.
- (viii) Providing financial assistance to Voluntary Agencies to undertake afforestation and wastelands development activities on private and public lands.

[*Translation*]

**National Wasteland Development Board**

\*562. SHRI ARJUN SINGH YADAV:

SHRI VISHWANATH SHARMA:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Wasteland Development Board has failed in its programmes relating to plantation, development of nurseries and people's participation in afforestation;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the schemes proposed to be started for afforestation of wasteland and participation of public with a view to check the felling of trees and soil erosion?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) to (c) Statement I is laid on the Table of the House.

**STATEMENT I**

(a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The National Wastelands Development Board was established in 1985 with the mandate of undertaking wastelands development through a massive programme for afforestation and tree

planting with people's participation. The Board is also the nodal agency at the Central level to coordinate and monitor the progress of afforestation/tree planting activities under point no. 16 of the 20-Point Programme.

During the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90), the total area coverage under afforestation and tree planting activities in the country was 8.8 million hectares, against target of 8.6 million hectares. The yearwise targets and achievements are given in Statement II below. In all the earlier Plan periods from 1950 to 1985, the total coverage was 8.2 million hectares.

With a view to encourage public participation, the National Wastelands Development Board initiated the Decentralised People's Nurseries Scheme during 1986-87. During the Seventh Five Year Plan, the nurseries produced 140 crore seedlings against a target of 106 crore seedlines. The Board also initiated the Grants-in-Aid Scheme in 1985 to provide financial assistance to Voluntary Agencies to take up afforestation and wastelands development activities. During the Seventh Five Year Plan, an amount of Rs. 16.30 crores was released under the scheme to Voluntary Agencies for taking up 336 projects in different parts of the country.

The Wastelands Development Programme is aimed at checking land degradation, putting wastelands to sustainable use, increasing biomass availability, specially fuelwood and fodder, and promoting people's participation. Under the programme, the following schemes are being implemented by the National Wastelands Development Board:—

- (1) Integrated Wastelands Development Projects Scheme.
- (2) Fuelwood/Fodder Projects Scheme.
- (3) Decentralised People's Nurseries Scheme.

(4) Margin Money Assistance Scheme.

(6) Seed Development Scheme.

(5) Raising of Minor Forest Produce including Medicinal Plants Scheme.

(7) Aerial Seeding Scheme.

(8) Grants-in-Aid Scheme (for Voluntary Agencies).

### STATEMENT II

Year	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Targets . . .	1.45	1.71	1.79	2.00	1.68
Performance . . .	1.51	1.76	1.77	2.12	1.71
Achievement . . .	104.1%	102.9%	98.0%	106.0%	101.7%

[English]

**SHRI BIJOY KRISHNA HANDI-QUE:** Sir, the essence of Integrated Development Projects on Wasteland as a technology mission is people's participation. As a matter of fact, people's participation is also one of the 6 mini-missions organised by the Board for greening about 130 million hectares. So, Sir, my question is: In violation of the Forest Policy which allows the continued practice of engaging neighbourhood people to plant fuelwood and fodder trees a part of which they could collect for their use and providing them employment on priority, why does Government at this stage want to shift the responsibility to the private sector, thus leaving the rural population particularly the tribals, to the mercy of a new kind of privateers of industry?

**SHRI KAMAL NATH:** Sir, when I have answered this in my statement, which has been laid on the Table of the House, I have talked about involvement of the private sector in non-forest area. And in non-community lands, there is 35 million hectares of private wasteland. This is where we would like the private sector to assist in its greening.

**SHRI BIJOY KRISHNA HANDI-QUE:** Sir, the hon. Minister told the

*Economic Times* on July 22, 1991 that business houses or industries which will be engaged in greening of wastelands could use a part of the reforested land as their raw material and, contrary to the practice of planting species exclusively useful from conservation point of view, they have been given the freedom to choose species suited to their specific requirements merely from profiteering point of view. So, Sir, my question is: Whereas according to the Forest Policy natural forests serve as a gene pool resource and help to maintain ecological balance, and, as such, cannot be made available to industries for plantation-cum-commerce projects, does not the Government realise that it would defeat the very purpose of afforestation and tilt heavily towards the rich against the rural poor and all for the efficiency myth of privatisation?

**SHRI KAMAL NATH:** Sir, the news item, which the hon. Member has quoted, is incorrect. This was not what I had stated. But, I am completely in agreement with the Member's view that we shall be very selective where it involves the private sector. The question of private sector on forest land, anything to do on forest land, does not arise.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Shri Arjun Singh Yadav—not present.

Shri Vishwanath Sharma—not present.

Shri Digvijaya Singh.

**SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH:** Sir, the forest based industries in the country have been exploiting the forest reserves for a very long time and in lieu of that they have hardly contributed in afforestation programme. Would the hon. Minister make it obligatory on all forest based industries for making a compensatory plantation on forest lands, which are close to these industries?

Sir, the hon. Minister has just said that he would not allow any private sector to take up plantation on forest lands. This is looking at the view with a closed mind. I would request the hon. Minister to review this because there are lakhs of acres of denuded forest land, where there is not a single tree on the forest land, and they can be allowed for compensatory afforestation by the private sector. Would the hon. Minister reconsider his decision?

**SHRI KAMAL NATH:** The first part of this question relates to industry. Uptill 1988, when the Forest Policy was defined, industry was using its requirements from the forests. Now, industry is getting its requirements from imports and on the basis of its old plantations. Now, he raised the question of private sector's involvement in forest area. The total forest-degraded land is 35.9 million hectares. But at the same time, there is 93.69 million hectares of non-forest-degraded area. I would like the private sector to focus on the non-forest degraded land first, rather than think in terms of forest-degraded land.

**SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH:** I am speaking about government afforestation programme...

**MR. SPEAKER:** This is too big a policy matter to be replied in Question Hour. It relates to Ceiling Acts and all other things. Please do not drag it.

**SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH:** Sir, it does not relate to Ceiling Act. My concern is that they should not have a closed mind...

**MR. SPEAKER:** It involves ownership, possession and so many other things. Please sit down.

[Translation]

**SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to have a clarification regarding procedure. You have clubbed Q. No. 562 with this.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I called his name but he was not present.

**SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE:** Then who raised this question?

[English]

**MR. SPEAKER:** These two are clubbed. It is suggested that both the questions should be taken together.

[Translation]

**SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE:** In such cases, the Member writes to you.

[English]

**MR. SPEAKER:** That is why the office has suggested that they be clubbed together.

[Translation]

**SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE:** But is the Member present or not?

[English]

**MR. SPEAKER:** I do not know! After getting it done, he might have absented himself. It is written in my papers here that both the questions should be taken up together.

**SHRI JASWANT SINGH:** Mr. Speaker Sir, in reply to 552, the hon.

Minister has listed about 8 policy provisions, where the Government suggests that action has been initiated. I would like to seek clarification on three of those points where, according to Government, action has been initiated. First, with regard to setting up of tree growers' and farm forestry cooperatives, I would like to know from the hon. Minister how many such cooperatives have been established in Rajasthan. I ask this because it is part of the reply given by the Government. Secondly, Government asserts that it has set up a National Fund for Afforestation, contributions to which attract tax relief. How much contribution has been made to this National Fund for Afforestation since it was set up and what is the capital it has just now?... Need I repeat the question?

SHRI KAMAL NATH: No, I understand it.

With regard to tree cooperatives in Rajasthan. I do not have the specific figure of Rajasthan. It is a State subject...

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: It is not a State subject. It is a policy provision of the Union Government, whereby they are setting up tree growers' and farm forestry cooperatives in States.

MR. SPEAKER: These are cooperatives.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Yes, these are co-operatives. I merely want to know how many such co-operatives have been set up in Rajasthan. If the Government sets up a policy, surely there is a monitoring mechanism to see whether that policy is being implemented or not.

The Minister has now received a slip from the officials. I hope he would be in a better position to reply.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Let me correct the hon. member. This is a policy provision whereby we advise the State

Governments that this is one of the policies to promote tree growers co-operatives to create an access between the community and the industry.

With regard to the State of Rajasthan, specific figures are not available. It is not a question of getting any slip.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Has even one cooperative been set up?

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Yes, It has been set up.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: So, you know that there is one.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: I know the States in which the tree growers' cooperatives scheme is operational.

The State Governments have informed us. Now, how many such cooperatives are there, I do not have information. But I will inform the hon. Member, if he so desires.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: I want to know what is the quantum of capital collected in the National Afforestation Fund uptil now?

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Sir, it was a tax free fund to invite donations from anybody and everybody which could be directed towards the afforestation. I am not aware of the funds received so far. I am not aware of the specific figures. But, I am aware that it was not very substantial.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: This is an aspect of the Union Government's functioning. The National Afforestation Forestry Fund is set up tax free by the Union Government which is included in the written reply given to the House and the hon. Minister says that he is not aware how much fund has been collected into Afforestation Fund.

**SHRI KAMAL NATH:** As I said, it was very nominal, something like Rs. ten lakhs. Now, it might be 11, 10 or 9.8 lakhs, I do not know.

**SHRI JASWANT SINGH:** The Minister cannot get away by saying something like nominal.

**THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (Shri Arjun Singh):** I would suggest that the hon. Member should make a handsome contribution to this fund.

**SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE:** And that way to evade or avoid taxes.

**SHRIMATI BASAVA RAJESWARI:** Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister about the total number of wastelands development projects which have been sanctioned for Karnataka from the Development Board? If so, what are the projects sanctioned and the total amount from the Central Government?

**MR. SPEAKER:** This kind of question can be replied in writing.

**SHRI KAMAL NATH:** Sir, it is a very detailed statement. I will submit it to the hon. Member.

**SHRI MUKUL BALKRISHNA WASNIK:** Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister whether the Government is seeking any financial assistance from the World Bank and other financial institutions for implementing the programme of the Wastelands Development Boards. Secondly, may I know from the hon. Minister whether all the States have taken up the programmes under the Wastelands Development Board? Have they set up the Committees for doing so and which are the States which have not set up the Wastelands Development Boards?

**SHRI KAMAL NATH:** Sir, in 1985, the Government had established this Board and a Council under the Chairmanship of the hon. Prime Minister

and the State Chief Ministers and the Union Ministers as its Members. Wastelands Development Board is the nodal agency. As such, there is not a question of setting up of Boards in the State. Every State Government is free to set up its own Board and the World Bank is assisting the States. Nine States World Bank credit projects for afforestation have already taken up.

**SHRI M. R. KADAMBUR JANTHANAN:** Sir, my question is whether the private sector will be allowed to involve in the greening of wastelands. If any private sector is involved in this process of greening the wastelands will it be allowed to use its unaccounted money for the development of wastelands and the money used will be taken as accounted.

**SHRI KAMAL NATH:** Sir, the question he must direct to the Finance Minister. But, as far as greening is concerned, any money will do.

**SHRI ANNA JOSHI:** Sir, I have seen growth of *Besarmi* and *Goarghass* in wasteland and the growth of Jalkhumbi on the water beds of the river. That is the great hazard for the plantation of greening of the wasteland. So, has the Government any scheme for stopping the wild growth .....(Interruptions)

**MR. SPEAKER:** This question is about greening of the wasteland it is not about eradication of.....

(Interruptions)

**SHRI ANNA JOSHI:** These are the hazards, Sir.

**MR. SPEAKER:** No, no, this is about the greening of the wasteland. Yes, Shri Chandra Jeet Yadav.

**SHRI CHANDRA JEET YADAV:** Sir, in view of the fact that against thirty-three per cent of the total area, we have only thirteen per cent forests in our country.....(Interruptions)

**SHRI JASWANT SINGH:** It is only 11.6 per cent.

**SHRI CHANDRA JEET YADAV:** Anyhow, even thirteen per cent is not very high. So, Sir, that is causing a lot of hazards like drought, shortage of rainfall, expansion of desert and everything. According to my information, after having spent Rs. ten thousand crores, we have miserably failed in forest plantation and tree plantation. Will the Minister tell this House that according to the new national policy of 1988, what are the concrete steps being taken so that the real plantation takes place and the money does not go waste?

**MR. SPEAKER:** That is mentioned in the policy itself.

**SHRI CHANDRA JEET YADAV:** No, Sir, it is not mentioned there at all.

**MR. SPEAKER:** O.K., only salient features you can mention, Mr. Minister, not all because the policy is a very long policy.

**SHRI KAMAL NATH:** Sir, it is true that it is a matter of great concern that really the area covered under forests is 11.6 per cent. This year there is the highest target which is being set, which is eighteen lakh hectares of plantation. As soon as the season ends, I will be able to tell the House how far we have succeeded. What is implied in what the hon. Member has said is that these figures are not really there and the plantation really does not take place. I am taking steps to do the test checks to see that where plantation is supposed to take place has to taken place. But that can happen only after the season ends.

[*Translation*]

**SHRI RAM NAGINA MISHRA:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have some per-

sonal experience of barren and wasteland as I am myself a farmer. If the field ridges are raised, water accumulates there and as a result thereof, the land becomes fertile. Plants and vegetation grows there and land becomes cultivable. As such I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to whether he would allot barren and waste land to landless people and would also make arrangements to extend financial assistance to them so that land could become fertile, forests could be grown there and land so reclaimed could also be utilized to grow cereals.

[*English*]

**SHRI KAMAL NATH:** Sir, no forest land can be allotted to anybody. However, the State Governments are free to allot revenue land to anybody and to any category they so desire.

**SHRI P. M. SAYEED:** Sir, I want to know from the hon. Minister whether the Central Government has received any proposal from the State Government to start forest-based industries on the private wasteland. I understand that there was some proposal from the Madhya Pradesh Government which the Central Government rejected. I do not know whether it is true or not. What is the reaction of the Central Government if such proposals come?

**SHRI KAMAL NATH:** Sir, we are not concerned with industry on private land. Anybody is free to set up any industry as per the provisions of laws and other rules on any land which he so desires under the Forest Act. But there are other implications in the environment and pollution laws.

**SHRI ARJUN SINGH:** Sir, the hon. Minister needs to be congratulated for his performance.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, it was all pervading and good answers.